A Reduction of Trichantha to Columnea (Gesneriaceae

C. V. Morton

I have worked off and on with Columnea and Trichantha for many years, and at times I have been convinced that they ought to be separated and again that they ought to be united. They are separated as genera only by the presence of elongate appendages between the corolla lobes in Trichantha and the absence of these in Columnea. These appendages, of unknown function but probably connected with pollination, are peculiar, and I finally decided before publishing my "A Revision of Trichantha (Gesneriaceae)" (Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 1-27. 1963) that they were unlikely to have arisen independently in different lines of evolution and so decided to recognize Trichantha as a genus, realizing that it was a sort of "one-character genus," since the species included were rather diverse.

No sooner was this paper in press than I received from Dr. H. E. Moore, Jr., some fresh specimens of Columnea hirta Klotzsch & Hanstein, a rather common and well-known Costa Rican species, which clearly showed appendages between the corolla lobes; these are not obvious in herbarium specimens and had not been reported. Since this species is very different from the other species placed in Trichantha and is in other respects quite typical of the section Columnea itself, it was clear that these appendages are not of fundamental importance in delimiting genera, or even an independent section.

The species of "Trichantha" vary not only in the character of the corollas but also in leaf characters. It appears that the character of the leaves of a pair being equal or strongly unequal does indicate natural subdivisions in Columnea. Therefore, in now reducing Trichantha to Columnea it is necessary to distribute the species in three sections. The three species T. moorei, T. formosa, and T. aliena, which have the leaves of a pair subequal and subregular corollas, belong in sect. Systelostoma. As mentioned above, C. hirta, with the leaves of a pair equal and the corolla strongly bilabiate, belongs in sect. Columnea. The other species, with the leaves of a pair strongly unequal and corolla subregular, fit into sect. Ortholoma.

When publishing my revision I overlooked a species that would obviously fall into Trichantha by reason of its elongate corolla appendages, one that I had myself described twenty years earlier, namely Columnea dissimilis Morton (Ann. Mo. Bot. Gard. 29: 47. 1942), the type of which was from El Valle de Antón, Province of Coclé, Panama (Allen 2483, US). In general aspect this species is different from any of the others and is probably not really at all closely allied. In my key it would go into the first arm "Corolla tube densely hirsute-tomentose," etc., and the characters of the leaves of a pair being strongly unequal

would place it near T. rosea Morton, which differs in many ways, some of the more important being:

Calyx lobes lanceolate, acuminate at apex, 2.5-3 cm. long, remotely glandular-denticulate; corolla appendages ca. 7 mm. long, orange-red pilose; corolla orange-red...C. dissimilis

Calyx lobes filiform at apex, 1.3-1.5 cm. long, deeply dissected into 2-4 pairs of linear lateral lobes up to 5 mm. long; corolla appendages 15-20 mm. long, densely rose-tomentose; corolla rose-red.....T. rosea

Seven of the species of Trichantha already have names in Columnea: Columnea dissimilis Morton, C. hirta Klotzsch & Hanst., Trichantha illepida (Moore) Morton = Columnea illepida Moore; Trichantha major Hook. = Columnea major (Hook.) Hanst.; Trichantha minor Hook. = Columnea minor (Hook.) Hanst.; Trichantha moorei (Morton) Morton = Columnea moorei Morton; Trichantha teuscheri Morton = Columnea teuscheri (Morton) Moore. The remaining species may now be transferred as follows:

Columnea aliena (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha aliena Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 5. 1963.

Columnea bullata (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha bullata Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 16. 1963.

Columnea clara (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha clara Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 19. 1963.

Columnea elegans (Rose) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha elegans Rose ex Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 23. 1963.

Columnea formosa (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha formosa Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 23. 1963.

Columnea rosea (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha rosea Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 7. 1963.

Columnea rosea f. latifolia (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha rosea f. latifolia Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 8. 1963.

Columnea rosea f. viridis (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha rosea f. viridis Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 8. 1963.

Columnea tropicalis (Morton) Morton, comb. nov.
Trichantha tropicalis Morton, Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 38: 13. 1963.

National Museum of Natural History
Washington, D. C.